



Regina Catholic Schools

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE REGINA ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 81

Bob Kowalchuk
Chair

Domenic Scuglia
Director of Education

Safety ALERT **February 28, 2019**

MOMO Challenge

Regina Catholic Schools would like to share some important Safety information with our parents and community. The safety of our students is always our number one priority. We work closely with many organizations, two of them being the *North American Centre for Threat Assessment & Trauma Response* and *Safer Schools Together*. They have issued the following warning and information for parents and teachers. We would like to share their response to the *MOMO Challenge* and some safety tips for you and your children/students.

We are receiving numerous calls with questions and concerns regarding the *MOMO Challenge* that has resurfaced on multiple social media platforms. The *MOMO Challenge* first started in 2016 on a mobile instant messaging application called *WhatsApp*. A phone number associated with the name MOMO and a picture of a girl with bulging eyes and widespread mouth would use a feature of the app called 'Quick Add' where the app would allow the user to add and message multiple numbers in a short period of time to then send messages back and forth with any individual who was willing to respond.

The nature of the messages usually start out innocent such as "wanna play a game?" which can then evolve into MOMO encouraging the child to engage in self-harm and suicidal behaviours. The motive to follow through with the challenge is that MOMO tells the child that they know where they live (the address can typically be found through reverse search of the phone number) along with their parent's name, which is generally connected to the phone number. This can escalate to threats towards family and or loved ones if they do not follow through with the challenge or if they contact local authorities.

Recently the *MOMO Challenge* has reappeared in multiple *YouTube* videos that are specifically intended for younger audiences. Typically, the *MOMO Challenge* will be featured in videos (such as Peppa Pig, Paw Patrol, Minecraft gameplay) that come from new or unreliable

YouTube accounts and begins 5-10 minutes into the episode, after attempting to establish as a legitimate video. Parents/Caregivers should carefully monitor what their children watch on *YouTube* and only allow them to watch trusted channels.

Online challenges such as the *MOMO Challenge* unfortunately do circulate quite regularly. Parents should not overreact; however, it is important that they speak with their children regarding all aspects of their online activity and explain potential risk of using certain streaming platforms so that they can recognize dangerous online behaviour.

If you have concerns about your children accessing *Youtube*, please be aware that you are able to block *Youtube* from your internet router

<https://www.wikihow.com/Block-Unwanted-Site-From-Your-Router>.

Students should be encouraged to report concerning online behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable to a trusted adult or through anonymous online reporting tools:

<https://www.psstworld.com/>

List of some Approved *Youtube* Channels:

- Ryan ToysReview
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChGJGhZ9SOOHvBB0Y4DOO_w
- Blippi <https://www.youtube.com/user/BlippiVideos>
- The Axel Show <https://www.youtube.com/user/theaxelshowadventure>
- CookieSwirlC <https://www.youtube.com/user/CookieSwirlC>
- Toys Unlimited <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzldYMdAtTsWucGCZyZvN6w>
- Peppa Pig – Official Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/theofficialpeppa>

Caution should be utilized if children have access to *Youtube* on their mobile devices. Alternatively, many streaming apps such as *Netflix* have Kid Friendly functions that can be turned on to allow children to browse and stream videos without being exposed to inappropriate content.

Key Reminders:

1. It is essential to stay vigilant when children/students report “worrisome behaviours” especially those students who may be struggling at this time.
2. Be aware that if there is a shift in the behavioural baseline of a child/student.
3. Pay close attention to individuals who seem fixated on the *MOMO Challenge*.
4. The role that social media plays as both a risk enhancer as well as a prominent contributing source of data has never been stronger. Be aware and review your child/student’s online behaviour. An accurate risk determination cannot be made without reviewing their digital baseline.
5. We collectively, staff, parents/ caregivers, need to “strategically” intensify our connections with our children who may be vulnerable to engaging in the *MOMO Challenge*. The power of positive, meaningful human connection is one of the best prevention strategies we can utilize.

Thank you for your time and attention. We are constantly working towards safe and caring environments in all our schools. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



David Magnusson
Superintendent of Education Services
Regina Catholic Schools
P 306-535-7706
E-Mail d.magnusson@rcsd.ca

Strengths; Harmony, Developer, Responsibility, Adaptability